

tion to this committee to read a letter or letters that a man cannot be cross-examined on. In the case of these other letters they were put into the hands of men who knew the circumstances in regard to them and could explain them. This letter that you want to read stands alone, and is from a man who does not come here and take the oath and submit himself to cross-examination in regard to it. I think you will see the point yourself without any difficulty?—A. I quite see that.

The CHAIRMAN.—We have not taken anything of the kind from anybody else and it would be a new departure entirely.

Mr. LANCASTER.—If we were to allow such a thing we would be overwhelmed with letters by men who would make statements and would not come here and swear to them. Any crank could write a letter containing all sorts of things and expect it to go down as evidence.

Mr. SLOAN.—Perhaps the witness could give a synopsis in his own words.

Mr. LANCASTER.—Personally I have no objection to Mr. Sprague swearing to anything in that letter that he knows to be a fact.

The CHAIRMAN.—If he knows the man has stated facts.

Mr. LANCASTER.—But the witness should not tell us what Mr. Shields says unless he knows it to be true himself.

Mr. SLOAN.—Mr. Sprague can embody any of the facts in the letter in his own evidence.

The CHAIRMAN.—Certainly if you know anything contained in the letter of your own knowledge the committee will hear you, otherwise I don't see the use of it at all.

The WITNESS.—The reason Mr. Shields sent me that letter at all was that one of the witnesses, Mr. Wilkinson, who lives in the same town as this man lives in did not appear to know very much about it. It appeared strange to him that a witness before this committee and a fellow townsman did not know a man who was conducting the lumber business and had twenty yards.

Mr. LANCASTER.—It would not be proper if you were allowed to contradict something some one else said by some one writing a letter to you?—A. It does not contradict anything. It gives a statement of the number of yards he operates and the amount of business he does.

Mr. LANCASTER.—We cannot accept that statement unless it is put in under oath. Look at the door we would be opening if we accepted your suggestion. Do you not see it yourself.

The WITNESS.—Yes.

Mr. LANCASTER.—It would be interminable.

The CHAIRMAN.—We would never get done.

Mr. HERRON.—It would be no good to have such evidence, such stuff, put on the record here.

Mr. LANCASTER.—If letters were written as to statements of fact and were not sworn to we do not know what influence it might have.

The CHAIRMAN.—We would be putting on the record something that ought not to be there.

Mr. LANCASTER.—Do you know whether there is anything in the letter that refreshes your memory as to any statements you want to make? If so, we don't want to stop you.

The WITNESS.—No, thank you, Mr. Lancaster, there is nothing in it that I know, it is only with reference to his own company.

Mr. LANCASTER.—Then, I don't think you ought to read it. That is my own opinion. I don't know what the rest of the committee think.

The WITNESS.—Very well.

The committee rose.